



Civil Defense: Community Problems and the NSRB Plan

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CIVIL DEFENSE: COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND THE NSRB PLAN

Frank P. Zeidler

In this article the mayor of Milwaukee discusses the recent plan for U.S. civil defense issued by the National Security Resources Board, and the results of the tests held in Chicago in September. A previous article by Mayor Zeidler on municipal organization for civil defense appeared in the August-September issue of the Bulletin.



HOW ready are cities for ABC warfare — atomic, biological, and chemical warfare? Two civil defense meetings and a new publication have served to point out our strengths and our weaknesses.

The new publication, *United States Civil Defense*¹ (Document 128 of the National Security Resources Board) has been closely studied by local civil defense leaders all over the United States. Published shortly before the Chicago civil defense exercises of September 25-29, it figured in the discussions at these exercises and at the civil defense meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors in Washington on October 5 and 6.

The first impression gained by most civil defense directors with whom I have spoken is that *United States Civil Defense* is principally a restatement of the Hopley report. This commentary, however, far from being an adverse criticism of *United States Civil Defense* is in reality a compliment to the excellence of the Hopley report.

However, close inspection of the volume reveals that it has gone beyond the Hopley report in that it hints at certain federal policies which are now in process of development. These policies were revealed at the meeting of the mayors by several representatives of the National Security Resources Board.

A principal spokesman on this subject was James J. Wadsworth, Acting Civil Defense Director. Wadsworth stated that the federal government would be responsible for research developments; for setting standards of protective construction; for developing training courses, manuals, and aids; for setting communication standards and procedures, and for financing a part thereof down to state warning

systems; for stockpiling medical and surgical supplies and aiding Red Cross blood storage; for developing radiological and bacteriological teams and mobile laboratories.

Wadsworth said that the federal government would not be financially able to pay for large amounts of equipment of the type normally used by cities to augment present supplies, for personal equipment, or for salaries of local civil defense workers.

The chief value of the book lies in the fact that it shows many cities how to get started on their programs, how to inventory their resources, and how to collect materials and men. It does not provide details on the actual operation of a civil defense organization in the field.

The document does not tell how to finance a program, and it does not deal directly with the problem of metropolitan organizations—city and suburban integration.

Up to this date, most cities have waited for the publication of *United States Civil Defense* to point an easy way to the organization of an effective civil defense program. The Chicago defense tests showed that there is no easy answer to this question.

The many committees which worked on the hypothetical test of three atom bomb bursts produced an immense amount of analytical work and revealed some major difficulties in operations.

The committees assigned to special tasks had to evaluate the hypothetical disaster and their resources for meeting it. Then they had to plan the proper disposition of these resources and forces.

It is natural that some defects in

judgment should have appeared, such as in the operation of a warning system, in the estimate of the psychological ability of people to respond to the disasters, in the composition, disposition, and operation of certain forces, such as medical teams and rescue squads.

The principal value of the exercise, however, must not be overlooked. The Chicago exercise illustrated the immense amount of detailed work that must be accomplished in order to prepare an effective plan and to put it into operation quickly.

There is no escape from detailed study, from discussing and coordinating the many items involved, and from making pioneer judgments on civil defense in each local community. Every community presents a problem different from every other community. Generalized solutions to specific civil defense problems set down in the Hopley report and in *United States Civil Defense* must be adapted to fit local capacities.

As a result of the Chicago exercise and of the meeting of mayors in Washington, most local officials went away with the realization that they must solve their own problems.

* * *

Even the best organized cities reveal great civil defense weaknesses at the present time. The majority of them possess organizational charts, but the actual organizations are non-existent except for a few top persons.

The psychological reactions of people and their actions under various pressures are but dimly understood. The ways of operating component parts of the civil defense organization are the subject of much debate. The struc-

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¹ Available from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. Price is 25 cents.

tion, low-ground or water bursts. The booklet begins with a discussion of the known methods of attack, gives a general description of the explosion, and describes the dangers resulting from heat flash, from radioactivity, both immediate and delayed and from blast. It concludes with a discussion of elementary nuclear physics. The entire manual is written in terms quite understandable to the layman. There are twenty-four excellent photographs of the effects of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs accompanied by explanatory notes showing blast effects on various types of structures, including large buildings, homes, and air-raid shelters. The book is essentially a description of the effects of atomic weapons with general discussions of precautionary measures to be taken beforehand and relief measures to be instituted afterward. It is not a manual for personal survival but is intended to supply background and working knowledge for all those associated with civil defense planning.

You and the Atomic Bomb. What To Do in Case of Atomic Attack. New York State Civil Defense Commission Public Pamphlet No. 1. Available from Department E, Life Magazine, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, New York. Pp. 33. 10 cents a copy; reduced rates for bulk orders.

This small pamphlet describes in a concise manner the precautionary steps to be taken in case of an atomic air raid. What will happen in case of an air burst and ground or water bursts is stated, and then those procedures which may in many cases spell the difference between survival and destruction are listed. Radiation and fire hazards are given special discussion and first-aid measures described.

How to Survive an Atomic Bomb. By RICHARD GERSTELL. New York: Bantam Books, October 1950. Pp. 149. \$0.25. Available on newsstands.

This book gives an excellent discussion in question and answer form of

- 1) What an atomic explosion may be expected to be like;
- 2) How to prepare for atomic attack;
- 3) What to do when it happens, with or without warning;
- 4) How to behave afterward.

The statements of the types of damage to be anticipated and the attempts to give a realistic estimate of the radiation hazards involved are specially commendable. The information and advice presented are of an extremely practical nature and are given in such a way as

to be appreciated by the general public and conducive to positive action. The book concludes with a section telling what each family can do to aid the civil defense program. Clear-cut directions

are given for those simple steps which, if taken by individuals during and after an atomic bomb attack, and anticipated beforehand, may result in the saving of their lives.

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ture of civil defense sections and their operation with other sections are most complex.

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There is little to be gained in discussing the many issues involved in civil defense organization revealed by the Chicago exercise and the resulting problems which have been aired at the meeting of mayors. A course of action is open.

This is the answer to what cities can do:

1. They must make their own estimate concerning the immediacy of the danger by keeping abreast of developments in the international scene. This can be done by thoroughly reading reliable newspapers and by following the comments of several news magazines and publications. Estimates on the foreign situation which were given to the mayors by military experts were close to the estimates one derives from wide reading.

2. On the basis of these estimates, city officials should develop their education program and present it to their own citizens. A properly educated citizenry will reduce public apathy.

3. Cities should set up an organizational structure similar to those recommended in either the Hopley report or *United States Civil Defense*. Most city patterns now follow these plans.

4. Large cities should encourage surrounding communities to conform to the central pattern with organizations built on similar patterns, using similar titles.

5. Cities should evaluate their target value. Zone by zone they should see what community facilities are most vulnerable.

6. Cities should decide what they need in order to protect these zones.

7. They should inventory their potentials and resources in meeting their needs. Deficiencies will be apparent from this study.

8. Cities should check with their neighbors to see what can be done to remedy their deficiencies.

9. Cities can then appeal to the state and federal government for finan-

cial or other help in filling needs which cannot be met with community resources.

No state or federal financial program can be forthcoming until local communities know what they actually need. As local plans evolve, state and federal patterns will develop.

* * *

Many cities have completed their organization charts and are now wrestling with the task of uniting parts of their organizations into operating companies.

As an example, a plan of the City of Milwaukee proposes that Safety, Civilian Relief, and Medical Battalions be established. A Safety Battalion will consist of a fire-fighting company, a clearance and demolition company, a rescue company, and a utilities service company. Additional units of less than company strength will be a medical services and first-aid unit, a communications unit, police escort unit, bomb reconnaissance unit, and a radiation detection unit. These battalions will be dispersed.

Civilian Relief Battalions will deal with registration, identification, information, emergency feeding, clothing, and billeting. Units will operate shelters and mobile relief units.

Medical Service Battalions raise some basic problems which will not be discussed here. Their tasks will be to operate major and temporary hospitals and first-aid stations.

* * *

The publication of the Hopley report, *The Effects of Atomic Weapons* and now *United States Civil Defense* have produced enough basic literature to enable each community to attack its own problems at once. In addition, enough sound theory has been enunciated in the August-September issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to assist basic decisions on how much weight to put on dispersal or protective construction in each community. For the present, local initiative must do the rest until one or the other of the local plans proves its superiority for federal adoption.